01437

1965/02/16

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

February 16, 1965

~~TOP SECRET~~

DECLASSIFIED
Authority NSC 7-25-80 letter
By mjp, NARS, Date 9-2-80

MEMORANDUM TO THE PRESIDENT

SUBJECT: Telegram to Ambassador Taylor

1. The attached draft is based on your comments at our 1:30 meeting. It would be desirable to get it out to Taylor tonight, and also to get the same thing out to Bruce for his discussions with Wilson. As you will remember, you promised Wilson a memo on our exact position, and Wilson has been after Bruce to find out in more detail just what our thinking is. This telegram does not tell when the next military action would be, and I believe it is quite safe to let Bruce have it.

2. I call your attention to the alternative language in brackets at the bottom of page 2. You said "prompt and adequate and measured." I believe that for a policy of continuing action the words "adequate and measured and fitting" are better. "Fitting" is the word we used at the time of Tonkin Gulf, and if we are going to continue actions in a situation in which there is no spectacular outrage like Pleiku, I think "fitting" is a better word than "prompt." It may sound like mere semantics, but I think it is quite near the center of the problem of stating your desires precisely. Will you strike out whichever adjective you do not want?

McG. B.

OK for Taylor as revised ✓

OK for Bruce as revised ✓ Speak to me ✓

~~TOP SECRET~~ attachment

COPY LBJ LIBRARY

~~TOP SECRET~~ 2/16/65

~~TO; AmEmbassy Saigon for Ambassador Taylor~~

In order to make sure that your understanding of current ~~policy is precisely the same as~~ our thinking is in ours, we are sending you the following guidance which is being distributed to State and Defense to control all actions and all public comments in the ~~next two weeks.~~ This ~~guidance~~ supersedes all previous discussions of our thinking:

1. We have recommended, and the President ~~has~~ concurred in, we think will continuing air and naval action against North Vietnam whenever and wherever necessary. Our thinking has been and continues to be that any such action shall be limited and fitting and adequate as a response to the continuous aggression in South Vietnam directed in Hanoi.

2. Within 24 hours after the next military action we expect to make a statement. Current plan is that this statement would come from Secretary of State, but decision is not final. This statement of policy ~~will be consistent with three points you have stated to Khanh, but for your guidance, following language more accurately states President's~~ ~~last~~ will reflect following elements of our thinking ~~current thinking:~~

a. First and foremost, we shall intensify by all available means the program of pacification within South Vietnam. FYI. ~~The President has directed that~~ every possible step will be taken to find and attack Viet Cong concentrations and headquarters within South Vietnam by any and ~~all~~

~~TOP SECRET~~

COPY LBJ LIBRARY

conventional means available to GVN and U.S. End FYI.

b. Execution of a joint program of measured and limited air action against selected military targets in the DRV. Air strikes under this program will be jointly planned and agreed.

c. We plan detailed presentation to the UN Security Council of the case against the DRV as the aggressor. We do not repeat not ~~currently~~ expect to indicate readiness for talks or negotiations at this time.

In execution of item c. above, Ambassador Stevenson will call for a meeting of the Security Council immediately after next military action against DRV and will there present a fully documented demonstration that the basic cause of the trouble in SVN is aggression from the North. Stevenson will keep focus on DRV aggression.

3. Careful public statements of USG, combined with fact of continuing air action, are expected to make it clear that military action ~~against the North~~ will continue while aggression continues. But focus of public attention will be kept as far as possible on aggression, not on military operations. There will be no comment of any sort on future actions except that all such actions will be /~~prompt and~~/ adequate and measured /~~,~~/ and fitting /~~,~~/ to aggression. Each new military action

COPY LBJ LIBRARY

will be reported at once to the Security Council, together with an account of continuing acts of aggression.

4. Concurrently with next military action, the US will inform major friendly governments as well as the Soviet government of our views as outlined above.

###

COPY LBJ LIBRARY